

FILING COSTS NEED WATCHING

Before today's purse-string holders approve an expenditure for new equipment, supplies, procedures or personnel, they usually weigh the proposal carefully. They want to know what the cost will be, who will benefit, how production will be affected; and quite likely they will end by asking, "How much actual cash will it save?"

To an ever-increasing extent management people also are reviewing *present possessions*. They inspect equipment, check supplies, examine procedures and test the personnel. Unfortunately, even in firms that take these precautions, the reviewers usually bypass the records room where the cost of operation probably has soared like a ballistic missile in recent years.

To get an accurate filing-cost picture, the research department of Record Controls, Inc. recently made a study to discover the average annual cost of maintaining one four-drawer filing cabinet. Regardless of the nature and value of papers filed, that figure is \$389.06.

Real estate boards, building managers associations, office management associations, and equipment houses supplied space, maintenance, salary and equipment figures. The resulting averages, as shown in the following breakdown, can be used as a basis for figuring annual costs per four-drawer cabinet and regulating them if they are too high.

Space, 6.7 sq. ft. @ \$3.50 per sq. ft.	\$23.45
Cabinet amortized over 10 yrs.	10.50
Supplies	34.51
Carrying charge	10.50
Clerk's salary \$60, pro rata for four	
dra.	208.00
Maintenance at \$3.00 per sq. ft.	20.10
Supervisory costs and executive	
planning time	82.00

\$389.06

Very often the chief cause of these high costs is the lack of any proper plan of retention and destruction. In many current files obsolete papers, duplicate copies, and temporary correspondence are occupying space which should be reserved for genuinely cur-

rent records. With the cost of retaining papers so very high, few companies can afford to hoard useless ones. By means of periodic microscopic inspections, efficiency in the records room can be raised to as high a level as that of the production line while taking fewer dollars from the company budget.

The records problems confronting private business are faced also by the United States Government in their Records Centers. Through the regional offices of the General Services Administration steps have been taken to solve them. The following statistics tell clearly what savings have been realized since 1950 through examinations of records areas and a general housecleaning program throughout the country.

In a single year, 1952, by destroying worthless records, nearly 600,000 square feet of storage space were released. By 1956 the annual release of office space rose from practically nothing to almost 400,000 square feet. This weeding and destruction operation is a continuing one which prevents the boarding of useless papers.

This cleaning-out process also freed much filing-cabinet space. The high figure was reached in 1953-54 when 55,000 file cabinets were emptied. The estimated disposal for 1958 will be about 300,000 cubic feet of records.

In 1951, on the average, 0.79 cubic feet of records occupied one square foot of floor space. By the use of improved equipment and procedures this figure rose to 2.46 in 1957. It is estimated that a record of 2.75 will be reached in 1958.

The cost per square foot of floor space in 1951 was \$0.35. The figure rose to a high of \$0.55 in 1955, dropping to \$0.53 in 1957. The cost per cubic foot of records fluctuated widely over the six-year period between 1951 and 1958. From \$1.27 in 1952 it dwindled to \$0.68 in 1955, then rose to \$1.03 in 1957. In 1951 the number of cubic feet per man-year was 4,715. The figure dipped to 4,188 in 1952, rose in 1956 to 8,040, then dropped to 6,320 in 1957.

The cost per reference in government files was \$1.17 in 1951 and, through improved training and procedures, dropped steadily to a low of \$0.52 in 1957. In 1951 only 2,965 references were handled per man-year, but

in 1957 the number was 9,320. From 1951 through 1956 the cost per cubic foot of records destroyed rose from \$0.65 to \$0.92 but fell in 1957 to \$0.86.

The number of cubic feet of records destroyed per man-year in 1951 was 6,118. The total dropped to 5,983 in 1952, rose to 10,520 in 1953, then slipped to 6,601 in 1957.

Despite salary raises, the cost per cubic foot of records administered fell from \$1.35 in 1951 to a low of \$0.639 in 1957. A still lower figure, \$0.631, is estimated for 1958.

The General Services Administration has conducted an intensified campaign to bring about the savings outlined above. All types of records have been examined. Their arrangements, housing, required retention periods and all other relevant factors have been carefully studied. Procedures, personnel training, and methods of purchasing have come under the close scrutiny of the men and women who are trying to lower the cost of keeping the nation's records. What they have done can also be accomplished in private industry, in fact in your own office. The next time you walk into your records department look at it and ask yourself, "Are our records costing us too much?"

They probably are.

FOR YOUR LIBRARY

How to File and Index, by Bertha M. Weeks, President Record Controls, Inc., The Randall Press Company \$4.50

Retention and Preservation of Records with Destruction Schedules, Record Controls, Inc. 4.00

File This, Please, Marjorie T. Poyen, Vice President Record Controls, Inc., The Dartnell Corporation40

Available through the offices of Record Controls, Inc.

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